



National Eating Disorders Association

**National Eating Disorders Association**  
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May 29, 2013

Mr. Derek Vest  
Chief Executive Officer  
Gentech Pharmaceutical US  
43 Barkley Circle #203  
Fort Myers, Florida 33907

Dear Mr. Vest,

On behalf of the National Eating Disorders Association, I am writing this letter to express our outrage and concern over Gentech's product PhenTabzTeen™ and its availability and marketing to minors. As an organization that encourages a healthy body image, acceptance, and self-confidence among teens—and one that serves individuals with potentially life-threatening eating disorders—we strongly oppose the ideal that Gentech is promoting and the availability of this product to minors. Most eating disorders begin with a diet. 35% of “normal dieters” progress to pathological dieting. Of those, 20-25% progress to partial or full-syndrome eating disorders. Thus, encouraging teens to diet—and take unregulated products to achieve weight loss—can have lasting and serious health consequences.

According to your website, “Gentech Pharmaceutical released the world's first teen non-prescription pharmaceutical formula this past year and teens finally have the support they need to take on weight loss and WIN!” It is utterly irresponsible to state that teens must lose weight in order to “win”. Your marketing suggests that a young person will feel a sense of accomplishment by taking PhenTabzTeen™ and losing weight. Many young people who view your advertisements may already have body image issues or an eating disorder. In fact, over one-half of teenage girls and nearly one-third of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting, and taking laxatives. Unfortunately, for many individuals that begin using unhealthy weight control behaviors during their teenage years, all that they have “won” is a lifetime of struggling with disordered eating or an eating disorder. For a population that is already extremely vulnerable to media messaging, what Gentech is promoting is extremely dangerous.

You state that your product will bring “a whole new level of excitement and hope for teens”. NEDA works to foster hope for those suffering with an eating disorder and their loved ones. Gentech is manipulating what hope means for teens with body image and self-esteem issues. Hope is learning to love yourself for who you are, not a goal to be a certain size.

Your advertising will only exacerbate the negative effects of social pressure on young people. Each day, NEDA speaks with individuals in the same age group as the targeted marketing demographic of PhenTabzTeen™. We often hear that marketing tactics which illustrate that body size directly equates to one's level of satisfaction are a contributor to their confidence issues. PhenTabzTeen™ is an offensive product that harms the demographic that you are targeting.



In addition, the fact that PhenTabzTeen™ is available to minors without a prescription is medically unsafe. Any decisions about the health of an individual, especially a minor, should be made in conjunction with an appropriate assessment by a physician and accompanied by their ongoing supervision. Since this product is available over-the-counter, teens can purchase and use it without any adult guidance or oversight, and could subsequently cause themselves harm through misuse. This drug can have serious physical implications for growing young bodies, and to sell it at all—especially without requiring a doctor’s recommendation—is careless.

Now that you have been informed of the dangers of PhenTabzTeen™ and the way that it is communicated to the public, it is imperative that Gentech alter their strategy and become a more socially responsible organization by removing this product from the market. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lynn Grefe  
President and CEO  
National Eating Disorders Association